



What is the economic tradeoff to Acton for preserving our “Small Town” character?

Housing costs are a major portion of most of our monthly budgets. And our houses are likely to be one of the largest contributors to our personal wealth. Our tax bills and housing prices are reflective of the type of community we have created over the years.

Acton is on the leading edge of the affordable housing movement in the state. Yet many of the same people who tend to opine on the need for more affordable housing and lower tax bills to allow elderly and fixed income residents to stay, fail to recognize their own role in creating the problem.

Acton’s tax revenue base currently draws down 87% of its money from home owners. With the 17th largest average property tax bill in the state and so little commercial tax revenue (13%) our spending on a per capita basis is the lowest in our neighborhood. Budgets are tight and taxes are high. What can be done?

Well, for starters, we have to decide if we, as a community are willing to continue to shoulder the tax burden of a commercially deprived residential only zone. If the answer is yes, then we should stop fussing about the eventual tax increases that come our way and we should abandon any thought that Acton will be affordable to lower income / fixed income residents. Or, we can choose to cut services and risk a reduction in property values as people will find other communities to get a better bang for their buck as it were.

On the other hand, if we desire to see our taxes held in check, we must not hide behind the mantra of such and such “might change the character of Acton. Acton has been changing since it was founded almost 300 years ago. Just ask my wife who used to walk past horse farms on her way from Jefferson drive to the Town Library. When we say this, we ought to acknowledge what we mean is we don’t want the character of Acton to change since the day we bought our property. And, given that so few of us have last names like Conant or Hosmer, well, you get the picture.

I believe a Home Depot on the site of the dump is a good first step. When they pay the nearly \$ 3 Million to cap the landfill and build an overpass over Route 2 they will not only save us money, they will add to our commercial tax revenue base without adding kids to the schools and residential buildings that require Town services. We should next approach Ikea and see if we can carve out a deal for them to acquire the auto mall property across route 2.

(Re-)Developing the Route 2 area while being mindful of the residents nearby will help start us on a better path towards holding steady property taxes and perhaps someday having them decline relative to inflation. As your Selectman I will aggressively support options like this to put us on a path to better fiscal health as a community.

On March 29th please cast one of your votes for Alex Horovitz